

# this issue's spotlight story

In August, Valley Interfaith Resource Center Victim Advocacy Team hosted an evening learning event to foster deeper community understanding of Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking, made possible, in part, through a Victim of Crime Act grant provided by the Ohio Attorney General's Office. Presenters Denise Kontras from the Ohio Domestic Violence Network and our Executive Director John R. Keuffer, III shared tremendously helpful information to educate the community, while bringing law enforcement and social service agencies together to facilitate a more knowledgeable working relationship.



## Our Mission

Partnering with the community to provide necessary resources and build self-sustainability.

## Volunteer Opportunities: GET INVOLVED!

Volunteers are crucial to achieving our mission. If you have time and talent, we need you on our team as we battle poverty in the Mill Creek Valley. Volunteering doesn't have to be a long-term commitment or take huge amounts of time from your already busy life. We offer numerous volunteer opportunities to give time to our organization. Whether you become a regular weekly volunteer, bring a special volunteer group, assist seasonally, or offer your skills for a one-time project, the benefits for both you and our organization abound. If you are ready to give your time to the fight against poverty, make new friends, and reap the many proven mental and physical benefits of volunteerism, contact our Volunteer Coordinator Alicia Stollenwerk at (513) 821-3233 or [astollenwerk@vicrc.org](mailto:astollenwerk@vicrc.org).



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WHAT'S INSIDE:

Annual Back to School program serves 1300 local youth, providing essential supplies and critical resources to struggling families.  
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Your support is more important now than ever. Learn about the numerous ways you can support the VICRC mission.  
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VICRC promotes better understanding of domestic violence and human trafficking through community workshop  
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Creating a sustainable tomorrow

# THE mission IN ACTION

## breaking the cycle: meeting deeper needs with resources

Building on half a century of service in the Mill Creek region, Valley Interfaith Community Resource Center mission expansion begins addressing deeper needs in an effort to break the poverty cycle.



In the years since, VICRC began to employ a “continuum of care” approach with programs spanning all levels of intensity and need. Our three primary service areas, emergency resources, crisis intervention, and sustainability, offer several programs with a variety of services meeting diverse needs. Those programs range from a USDA Choice Pantry reducing food insecurity to Crisis Intervention services that intervene when situations risk safety or stability by identifying deeper needs and coordinating referrals to additional services. *Learn more about the work in our sustainability service area on page 3.*

Founded in 1963, Valley Interfaith began as a food and clothing bank for community members experiencing poverty in the Hamilton County Mill Creek Valley. For several decades, the organization focused on emergency needs for local residents. In 2014, the agency began work to end the poverty cycle for those served by adding self-sufficiency services. In 2017, VICRC announced a new 3-5 year Strategic Plan, current name Valley Interfaith Community Resource Center (VICRC), and revised mission & vision. As part of the strategic plan, the agency expanded services as a community resource center.

## KAYLA’S JOURNEY

Kayla, a 26-year-old female, came to our agency in need of emergency food and clothing resources. During her visit, observant volunteers connected Kayla to a VICRC Victim Advocate. Kayla disclosed to our Victim Advocate a struggle with addiction that began as a coping method during a long-term domestic violence relationship. Kayla’s “boyfriend” sold her for sex through an online ‘escort’ service in order to support his living costs and eventually both of their addictions.

Through the caring support and engagement of the VICRC team, Kayla accepted help for her deeper needs by entering a residential drug treatment facility where she could be safe from her trafficker. Our Victim Advocate and Dr. Ron Arundell continue to work with Kayla and other women in similar circumstance. Each week they provide group therapy sessions to help the women build self-worth and come to terms with their addiction & past traumas thus beginning to see a path to a sustainable and successful life.



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## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S VOICE...

It has been a tremendous joy watching Valley Interfaith grow and succeed in its efforts to help create sustainable futures for those we serve. All of our successes are truly the result of the generosity of our donors, volunteers and our staff.

As a result, we've operated our Emergency Resources of Food and Clothing. We expanded to include Victim Advocacy services and we redesigned our Neighbors Empowered Program. All of these programs working as a Continuum of Care Model help us disrupt, if not end, cycles of generational poverty.

The last two years of our 55-year history focused on the 'life preserver' for those drowning in poverty who need to eat. Once we helped meet that immediate need we began to ask and learn about the inner barriers that our clients and their families are experiencing so we can help in a deeper sustainable way: We are providing referrals for Substance Abuse Treatment, Mental Health Support, Behavioral Health, Resume Building, Housing Support and Victim Advocacy.

Here is the harsh reality. As an agency, we cannot do or be all things for those in need if we cannot ensure our organization's financial sustainability. We've made tremendous strides in ensuring a viable financial future but we have a long road ahead and we need **YOU** now more than ever.

**YOUR HELP IS IMPORTANT NOW MORE THAN EVER!**

The need hasn't diminished but the costs just to stay open have increased. Our utility bills are rising. Our maintenance on vehicle to pick up food is increasing. The costs to run the Neighbor's Empowered Program which is vital and needs your help. **We need your support & those we serve need it.**

## Back to School Program serves 1300 youth

In Cincinnati, poverty is a persistent and pervasive issue. Despite economic improvements in the region, child poverty is on the rise throughout Hamilton County, meaning school age children continue to struggle. Research shows that poverty can have a lasting impact on children. Instability and hardships resulting from poverty have a short-term impact on a child's education and a long-term impact on a child's well-being into adulthood. Each year at VICRC we serve nearly 5000 individuals with income under 100% of the Federal Poverty Guideline. Of those individuals, more than 40% are children, around half of which reside in households headed by a single mother. These families experience a significant hardship at the start of each new school year, as already depleted financial resources cannot stretch to cover the additional costs.

**Our agency attacks the effects of poverty on many fronts. During our annual Back to School program, we support school age youth effected by poverty by ensuring they can begin a new school year with the tools necessary to be successful on their learning journey.**

During the program we provide school supplies, a new backpack, a new school uniform, and a gift card for new shoes. In addition to supplies, VICRC invites several partner agencies to attend the event to connect with families for additional resources that support school readiness and yearlong performance. Thanks to the generosity of our 2019 funders **The Charles Dater Foundation, United Way Success By 6®, and The Wyoming Junior Women's Club**, VICRC's 2019 Back to School program event provided essential school supplies and resources to nearly 1300 school age youth residing in Hamilton County.



## The numbers tell the story

This year alone nearly 1500 families visited our agency for help meeting basic needs like hunger and for referrals to address deeper needs.



- **4500 visits to our Food Pantry, that's more than 15,000 bags of groceries this year!**
- Over 200,000 lbs. of food donated from 8 main retail partners.

- **Avg of 74 individuals served per day.**
- 40% of those we serve are youth under 18.
- **44% of the households have minor children.**
- Nearly 50% of the households we serve visit our agency 3x or more each year.
- **120 victims of crime identified & served.**
- 10 families enrolled in Neighbors Empowered.



## Neighbors Empowered yields lasting impact

The overarching goal of the Neighbors Empowered program is to provide the opportunity for women to break the cycle of poverty by building momentum & re-writing their future story. The program strives to increase readiness for change, address barriers, build resources, provide knowledge on sustainability topics, and assist members to create a plan for the future. The vision is to support families on their journey as they improve overall quality of life and accomplish positive life changes that support a more stable future.

In 2019, VICRC set out to evaluate the program's long-term success and utilize our learning to maximize overall effectiveness moving forward.



Cycle 4 graduate, now employed by another non-profit, assists VICRC Back to School program

**Our long-term outcomes evaluation found the Neighbors Empowered program consistently left a positive impact, months to years, after program completion.** 65% of those surveyed reported their quality of life as stable or

thriving and 96% reported one or more major positive changes in their life after graduation. With the support of the **Elsa Sule Foundation** in August, VICRC began our 8<sup>th</sup> Neighbors Empowered program cycle with 10 single mothers enrolled in our newly restructured 10-week workshop. Cycle 8 looks forward to celebrating graduation in November.

***Neighbors Empowered built my confidence and let me see a lot of the potential I have as a person. I didn't have much confidence going into the class.***

To find out more about supporting the mission at Valley Interfaith Community Resource Center, please contact John Keuffer at **513.821.3233** or visit our website at **www.vicrc.com**



## 5 ways to support Our Mission

### 1 Give Financially

Invest in your community through a financial gift to our organization. Your gift will provide critical resources and create new opportunities for local families struggling to make ends meet.

### 2 Leave A Legacy

By making a planned gift, you can ensure we can provide for future generations. Make a long-lasting impact through a bequest in a will or trust, a life insurance policy, retirement plan, or charitable remainder trust.

### 3 Get Involved

Volunteers are the most precious resource for our agency. We have several types of volunteer opportunities for anyone interested in joining a team of committed people working to end the cycle of poverty.

### 4 Make Connections

You can support our mission through networking by hosting a donation drive, sharing our volunteer opportunities with your social network, or asking a VICRC staff member to speak at your faith community or membership club.

### 5 Use Your Voice

Positive word of mouth remains the best marketing tool. We invite you to share our mission, our good works, and our needs whenever & wherever possible!

